

Message Text

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43

ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY BEIRUT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 7912

INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN

USINT BAGHDAD

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KUWAIT

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV

CIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L BEIRUT 15686

E.O. 11652: XGDS-2

TAGS: POFOR, PINS, PINT, PINR, PLO, LE, SY

SUBJECT: PHALANGIST VIEW OF CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION

1. EMBOFF HAD OPPORTUNITY DEC 30 TO TALK BRIEFLY WIITH KARIM PAKRADOUNI, MEMBER OF PHALANGE POLITBURO AND REP TO HIGHER COORDINATION COMMITTEE, AT LATTER'S HOME IN SIOUFI SECTION OF ASHRAFIYEH. PAKRADOUNI MADE, INTER ALIA, FOLLOWING POINTS OF INTEREST RE CURRENT POLITICAL SITUATION.

2. SYRIAN INITIATIVE: PAKRADOUNI CONFIRMED THAT FIVE POINTS (REPORTED BEIRUT 15623) ARE HANDIWORK OF SYRIAN REGIME AND NOT RPT NOT PARLIAMENTARY INITIATIVE COMMITTEE AS BEIRUT PRESS HAS BEEN SUGGESTING. THESE POINTS ARE CENTERPIECE OF PRESENT EFFORTS TO RESOLVE LEBANESE OLITICAL
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CRISIS. IN PAKRADOUNI'S VIEW, SUBSTANTIAL AGREEMENT BY

MAJOR LEBANESE FACTIONS CAN BE ACHIEVED BY JAN 15 IF SECURITY SITUATION CAN BE KEPT UNDER CONTROL FOR THAT PERIOD. JANUARY, HE SAID, WILL BE THE BELLWEATHER FOR THE ENTIRE YEAR 1976. IF MOMENTUM TOWARD SETTLEMENT IS MAINTAINED, REMAINDER OF THE YEAR WILL BE REASONABLY CALM. IF SYRIAN INITIATIVE FAILS, DAMASCUS WILL PROBABLY DECIDE THAT FRANGIE MUST GO AND YEAR COULD BE HOLOCAUST WITH FULL-SCALE RELIGIOUS WAR THAT WOULD MAKE LAST NINE MONTHS SEEM TAME. UNDER SUCH CONDITIONS, THE PHALANGE WOULD HAVE NO CHOICE BUT TO ALLY ITSELF WITH CHRISTIAN FANATICS AND, IN EFFECT, SUPPORT CONCEPT OF PARTITION IN EXTREMIS. IN MEANTIME, HE CONFIDED, PHALANGE IS WORKING TO KEEP SYRIAN EFFORT ON THE TRACKS. PIERRE GEMAYEL WILL MEET DEC 31 WITH CAMILLE CHAMOUN, CHARBEL KASSIS AND CHARLES MALEK FOR EXPRESS PURPOSE OF ENLISTING THEIR SUPPORT FOR JOINT MARONITE CHRISTIAN ENDORSEMENT OF FIVE POINTS. PPAKRADOUNI SAID GEMAYEL INTENDS TO BRING MARONITE PATRIARCH KHREISH, A MODERATING FACTOR, INTO DISCUSSIONS AT SOME EARLY STAGE IN ORDER TO BRING EXTREME RIGHT-WINGERS AROUND TO REASON.

3. PAKRADOUNI STRESSED THAT FIVE POINTS WERE NOT RPT NOT CONCEIVED BY THE SYRIANS AS A FINAL SOLUTION SINCE OBVIOUSLY MANY DETAILS MUST BE FILLED IN AND NEGOTIATED. DAMASCUS, BASED ON ITS CONSULTATIONS WITH LEBANESE LEADERS, HOSE THESE PARTICULAR POINTS AS MINIMAL NECESSARY INGREDIENTS IN SOLUTION THAT MOST MAJOR PARTIES COULD ACCEPT. WHEN ASKED ABOUT THE INTRODUCTION BY PRES FRANGIE OF ISSUE OF NEW CONSENSUS TO INCLUDE OVERSEAS LEBANESE CHRISTIANS, PAKRADOUNI SAID THAT THIS WAS THE KIND OF DETAIL WHICH WAS SUPPOSED TO AWAIT AGREEMENT ON BROAD PRINCIPLES. FRANGIE HAS TRIED HIS IDEA OUT ON THE SYRIANS THROUGH THE MEDIUM OF LUCIEN DAHDAH WITHOUT GENERATING ENTHUSIASM.

4. PHALANGE-SYRIAN RELATIONS: PAKRADOUNI SAID THAT THE PHALANGE IS CONVINCED THAT THE SYRIAN REGIME, FOR PURELY "SYRIAN" REASONS, IS ANXIOUS TO COMPOSE THE LEBANESE PROBLEMS ON TERMS WITH WHICH THE CHRISTIANS CAN LIVE. HE SAID THAT THE PHALANGE MAINTAINS MORE OR LESS CONSTANT CONTACT WITH SYRIA THROUGH THE GOOD OFFICES OF AZZEM KANSO, HEAD OF THE PRO-SYRIAN BAATH IN LEBANON.
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PAKRADOUNI SPOKE ENTHUSIASTICALLY OF HIS VISIT TO DAMASCUS IN THE ENTOURAGE OF GEMAYEL DURING EARLY DECEMBER. HE SAID HE HAD PERSONALLY SPENT FOUR HOURS IN DISCUSSIONS WITH FOUNDER KHADDAM, WHOM HE SAID HAD INDICATED GREAT CONCERN WITH THE DANGERS OF "COMMUNIST" INFLUENCE IN LEBANON. PAKRADOUNI SAID THAT IT IS HIS EDUCATED OPINION THAT THE SYRIANS HAVE RELATIVELY LITTLE PROBLEM WITH THE PERSONAL VIEWS OF KAMAL JUMBLATT, FOR EXAMPLE, BUT ARE

VERY APPREHENSIVE RE HIS FLIRTATION AND COOPERATION WITH LEBANESE "COMMUNIST" ORGANIZATIONS. THUS, THE SYRIANS, LIKE THE "MODERATE" PALESTINIANS, HAVE BROUGHT CONSIDERABLE PRESSURE TO BEAR UPON JUMBLATT TO INFLUENCE HIS BEHAVIOR, ALTHOUGH DAMASCUS WISHES ULTIMATELY TO SALVAGE JUMBLATT AS VIABLE FACTOR IN LEBANON'S POLITICAL EQUATION.

5. THE DEAL: WHEN ASKED THE NATURE OF THE AGREEMENT RACHED WITH THE SYRIANS BY THE PHALANGE AND OTHER CHRISTIANS, INCLUDING FRANGIE, PAKRADOUNI RESPONDED AS FOLLOWS: THE SYRIANS HAVE STATED THAT WITHOUT POLITICAL PROGRESS, LEBANON CAN LOOK FOWARD TO LITTLE MORE THAN CONTINUED CIVIL STRIFE; AT WORST, FULL-SCALE RELIGIOUS WAR IS A POSSIBILITY. THEREFORE, SYRIA HAS URGED UPON GEMAYEL AND OTHER CHRISTIANS THAT THEY CONCEDE MINIMAL REFORMS ACCEPTABLE TO MUSLIMS--THESE, ACCORDING O DAMASCUS, FORM THE CORPUS OF THE FIVE POINTS. IN RETURN, DAMASCUS HAS GIVEN A SOLEMN COMMITMENT TO GUARANTEE THE BEHAVIOR OF PALESTINIAN ELEMENTS IN LEBANON AND INDEGENOUS "PROGRESS" FORCES WHIHH REVOLVE AROUND THE PALESTINIAN FEDAYEEN. AT THIS POINT, AN INTERRUPTION PREVENTED EMBOFF FROM PURSUING QUESTION OF HOW MUCH FAITH THE PHALANGE PLACE IN SYRIAN PROMISES PER SE. HOWEVER, IT WAS EVIDENT FROM PAKRADOUNI'S COMMENTS, AND PARTICULARLY HIS ARGUMENTATION RE SYRIA'S SELF-SERVING INTERESTS IN RESOLVING LEBANESE CRISIS, THAT THE PHALANGE REGARDS THE SYRIAN COMMITMENT AS A SUFFICIENT BASIS FOR TAKING INITIAL STEPS TOWARD MORE DETAILED NEGOTIATIONS.

6. ASKED IF 'ARAFAT WERE CLUED IN TO AND AGREED WITH SYRIAN INITIATIVE, PAKRADOUNI REPLIED THAT HE HAD NO RPT NO DOUBT ON THIS POINT. ON BASIS HIS CONTINUING CONTACTS WITH PLO/FATAH "MODERATES, PAKRADOUNI IS CONVINCED THAT CONFIDENTIAL

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'ARAFAT, WHOM HE DESCRIBED AS VERY RELIGIOUS MAN WITH LITTLE IN COMMON WITH LEFTISTS, GENUINELY BELIEVES LEBANESE CRISIS MUST BE QUICKLY BROUGHT TO AN END. LINKING HIS FINGERS TO ILLUSTRATE HIS POINT, PAKRADOUNI SAID THAT PRES ASAD AND 'ARAFAT ARE MARCHING IN LOCK STEP AT THIS POINT. HE EXPRESSED VIEW THAT, SHOULD EITHER LEBANESE OR PALESTINIAN "REJECTIONSISTS" PROVE TO BE STUMBLING BLOCK TO OTHERWISE ACCEPTABLE POLITICAL DEAL, 'ARAFAT IS PROBABLY PREPARED FOR MILITARY ACTION TO BRING THE RECALCITRANTS INTO LINE.

7. PARTITION: PAKRADOUNI WAS VERY INTRIGUED WITH BEHAVIOR OF PERIPATETIC RAYMOND EDDE AND LATTER'S RECENT COMMENTS IN PARIS REGARDING US "INDIFFERENCE" TO PARTITIONING OF LEBANON. EMBOFF ASSURED PAKRADOUNI THAT USG IS NOT

INDIFFERENT TO DISSOLUTION OF LEBANON WHICH WOULD BENEFIT NONE OF ACTIONS. CONFESSING THAT HE UNABLE TO ACCOUNT FOR EDDE'S STATEMENTS, EMBOFF SAID HE CERTAIN THAT NO RPT NO US OFFICIAL HAD GIVEN EDDE CAUSE TO BELIEVE THAT HIS PRECONCEPTIONS RE US POLICY HAD BASIS IN FACT. PAKRADOUNI EXPRESSED CONVICTION THAT EDDE'S REMARKS WERE EXTREMELY HARMFUL, FEEDING SUSPICIONS OF THOSE INCLINED TO VIEW US POLICY IN WORST POSSIBLE LIGHT AND HOPES OF THOSE WHO DO, IN FACT, FAVOR PARTITION. REGARDING LATTER, PAKRADOUNI SPOKE AT SOME LENGTH ABOUT "WORKING GROUP" OF CHRISTIAN INTELLIGENTSIA AT KASLIK BUSY COMPILING STUDIES ON LEBANESE CHRISTIAN MINI-STATE. AS EVIDENCE OF THEIR WORK, HE PROVIDED EMBOFF WITH XEROX COPIES OF TWO SUCH STUDIES (IN ARABIC) BY CHARBEL KASSIS AND SAID BUSTANY (COUSIN OF COL. JULES BUSTANY). GROUP ALSO INCLUDES CHARLES MALKE. PAKRADOUNI SAID THESE INDIVIDUALS HAD PROVIDED PAPERS TO PHALANGE FOR COMMENTS. HE SAID THAT HE, ON BEHALF OF PARTY, HAD GIVEN NO RPT NO SUGGESTION THAT PHALANGE SUPPORTS PARTITION AS OFFICIAL POLICY. HE REITERATED THE CRITIQUE HE HAD DELIVERED CENTERING UPON THE IMPRACTICALITY AND "ROMANTICISM" OF SUCH THINKING WHICH TAKES LEBANON AS A CIVILIZATION WHICH MUST BE SAVED TO THE EXCLUSION OF SUCH MUNDANE FACTORS AS POLITICAL REALITIES AND ECONOMIC CONSIDERATIONS. PAKRADIOUNI ACKNOWLEDGED THAT SUCH THEORIZING ASSUMES THAT ISRAEL WOULD PROBABLY BECOME THE MILITARY QUARANTOR OF THE RESULTING

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CHRISTIAN STATE; HE REFUSED, HOWEVER, TO BE DRAWN OUT CONCERNING WHETHER CONTACTS WITH ISRAEL TOWARD THIS END HAVE BEEN INITIATED BY ANY OF THOSE ADVOCATING PARTITION. NEVERTHELESS, HE EXPRESSED CONCERN THAT SUCH CHRISTIAN ELEMENTS, LIKE EXTREMISTS ON THE MUSLIM LEFTIST SIDES, HAVE CAPABILITY TO INITIATE INCIDENTS WHICH COULD DERAIL CURRENT EFFORTS TO HAMMER OUT FRAMEWORK FOR POLITICAL ACCOMMODATION. THE KASLIK GROUP, HE STATED, HAS A SMALL MILITA, CALLED "TANTHEEM" (THE ORGANIZATION) WHICH IS ACTIVE IN TWO PARTS OF ASHRAFIYEH. EXPRESSING THE CONVICTION THAT THE LEFT WAS THE FIRST TO RAISE THE BUGABOO OF PARTITION AND KEEP IT BEFORE THE PUBLIC CONSCIOUSNESS, PAKRADOUNI EXPRESSED REGRET THAT SOME MARONITE ELEMENTS HAD JOINED THE UNHOLY ALLIANCE AND WERE, IN EFFECT, COMPLETING THE TASK OF THE LEFT.

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